

## CHARLES BAILEY: A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF THE AUSTRALIAN APPORT MEDIUM

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### ABSTRACT

This paper documents the career of the Australian apport medium Charles Bailey and examines Bailey's influence upon the respective courses of spiritualism and psychical research in Australia during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Charles Bailey was an Australian spiritualist medium whose seances are best remembered for some remarkable apports, that is, the apparent paranormal transportation of exotic objects from distant places and their materialization in the seance room. He was a focus of attention among international psychical researchers from 1902 until the outbreak of the First World War, but his popularity with spiritualists was considerable throughout the fifty-year span of his career as a medium. In the Australian spiritualist press Bailey was hailed as having 'influenced the minds of the leading citizens of the capital and European Universities towards Spiritualism' (Wallis 1946, pp. 36-37) and having been 'probably the greatest apport medium the world has ever seen' (Morrison 1948, p. 10). Other commentators thought him nothing more than 'a mediumistic trickster' (Marriott 1911) and 'one of the most objectionable fraudulent apport mediums so far recorded' (Dingwall, Note 1). Irrespective of the validity of these assessments it is evident that Bailey's mediumship represents a most significant chapter in the history of Australian psychical research and if only on that basis the documentation of the case is justified.

The name 'Bailey' was a pseudonym, possibly devised for professional purposes but certainly used some years before he rose to national prominence. The medium was born Charles Beasmore. According to one obituarist Bailey/Beasmore was born at Richmond, a suburb of Melbourne, on 21 August 1857 (Neil 1947, p. 26); that information however is not confirmed by statistical records of the state of Victoria, nor is it consistent with the published estimates of Bailey's age at various stages of his career. Data on Bailey's marriage certificate and death certificate put the year of birth at approximately 1870, and although no official record has yet been located to document this date it does accord well with the medium's recorded history.

Little is known of Bailey's childhood. Most of the available information is to be found in issues of the Australian spiritualist publication the *Harbinger of Light*, and the frequently melodramatic and propagandist style of these accounts signals that they may well be apocryphal, at least in part. One such source (Benson 1935), purportedly a record of a spirit communication at one of Bailey's seances, reports that Bailey's parents migrated to Australia from England. It also claims Bailey left school during the fourth year of his primary school education, a matter of enduring interest to spiritualists in light of the cultured style and content of Bailey's spirit communications. While there may be an issue here deserving some explanation the situation undoubtedly has been overdrawn by some commentators. Thus the assertion by Morrison (1938, p. 404) that Bailey was 'illiterate' is contradicted by a fluent, grammatical and correctly spelt

letter written by Bailey (Note 2), a copy of which is held in the archives of the Society for Psychical Research. Also, in an interview with the editor of the *Harbinger of Light* (Bright 1906a) Bailey is quoted as saying he attended school until about 17 years of age and that as a young man he read a good many novels.

Bailey depicted his introduction to spiritualism along the following lines (Bright 1906a). He was raised as a Methodist and attended Sunday School. In 1888, when Bailey was about 18, a shopkeeper in the nearby Melbourne suburb of Collingwood discussed spiritualist ideas with him, and despite warnings from his parents (Benson 1935, p. 133) Bailey's curiosity was sufficiently aroused for him to accept the old man's invitation to a seance. Although Bailey's attendance at first was hesitant the medium's announcement that the young Bailey had 'mediumistic powers' may have encouraged him to join the regular sittings of the circle of some 12 to 15 people. In any event, during a subsequent sitting Bailey went into a trance and gave communications from the spirit of a clergyman named Draper (or Drapar) who had drowned in the sinking of a ship the *S.S. London*; Benson (1935) notes that the account of the 1866 wreck was verified a little later by reference to the original newspaper reports (see also 'Case' 1939, p. 94). After he had been participating in the circle for some 18 months the spirit controls stated that Bailey possessed the gift of apportionment. Later, when Bailey was in a deep trance, there appeared a stone dripping with sea water which was said to have been conveyed from the ocean by a spirit.

By this time Bailey was in employment. Accounts differ as to whether Bailey was a sales assistant in a shoe store (e.g., Benson 1935; Garscadden 1939) or an operative in a boot factory (e.g., Fodor 1966, p. 25; Harvey 1910, p. 59; Morrison 1938; Reichel 1909); the latter possibility appeals to sceptics because Bailey, being a short man, wore boots with a very large heel, conceivably large enough to be constructed so as to conceal small objects for the fraudulent purpose of simulated apportionment. Whatever his original vocation, Bailey was soon induced to become a part-time professional medium. Possibly this move was motivated by the fact that Bailey's normal employment left him 'poverty stricken' (Morrison 1938, p. 404), although this claim has been denied by Garscadden (1939). Another scenario communicated by the spirits via Bailey (Benson 1935, p. 133) was that Bailey's seances made him feel too fatigued for work the next day, and after intimating he might therefore have to leave the circle he was promised a salary by the other sitters. Bailey's salary was a talking-point among his spiritualist supporters, for it frequently was declared the monetary value of his apports far exceeded the payments for a sitting. Nevertheless the value of some of Bailey's apports, such as supposedly rare coins and antiquities, was grossly overestimated ('The Mediumship of Mr. C. Bailey' 1905, pp. 87-88), and even a spiritualist supporter of Bailey acknowledged the medium earned 'a fair income' from his seances (Neil 1947, p. 25).

Bailey's circle moved to the home of a Mr. Griegg where the apports continued. The principal controls during this period included the spirits of two physicians, Dr. Whitcomb and Dr. Peebles. Certainly the existence of Dr. H. M. Whitcomb can be attested historically: he practised in East Collingwood and later in Fitzroy (both suburbs of Melbourne) and returned to England to die in 1878 at the age of 47 (Note 3). Bailey's standing as a medium appears to have grown steadily during the 1890s, although this formative period of his career was



Charles Bailey  
c. 1870–1947

not without incident. At a seance on 4 December 1898 the spirit of the deceased physician Dr. Whitcomb was in control and diagnosed the ailments of some members of the circle. Unfortunately for Bailey one of the sitters was Senior Constable McManamny, who asked for advice in regard to a feigned leg disease. A treatment having been recommended, the police officer charged Bailey with obtaining money by false pretences. The medium was found guilty in the Court of Petty Sessions at Fitzroy and fined £5, with costs of 4 guineas. Given 14 days in which to make this payment, it was met by Bailey and/or a supporter on the day of the court hearing (Note 4).

Arguably the most crucial feature of the sittings for Mr. Griegg in the 1890s was that they were the means by which Bailey came to the attention of Thomas Welton Stanford. An American-born businessman, Stanford accumulated considerable wealth in Australia, principally through acting as the national distributor of Singer sewing machines. Stanford was fervently devoted to the spiritualist cause and used his considerable financial resources in its support. For example, he donated over half a million dollars for the establishment of a psychical research fellowship at Stanford University in California (the university founded by Stanford's brother). Although Stanford's backing of individual projects in the Australian spiritualist domain was not quite on the same scale as the fellowship, his patronage was very generous and he became an influential figure in Australian spiritualism, particularly in his adopted home-town of Melbourne. (For biographies of Stanford see Dommeyer 1975; Fredman 1962).

It was therefore to Bailey's substantial advantage that he secured Stanford's patronage. In 1902 Stanford invited Bailey to his home for the purpose of conducting a private seance. There are slightly differing accounts as to how this invitation came about. According to Bailey himself (Bright 1906a) Stanford attended a sitting at Griegg's house and was there introduced to the wondrous talents of the medium. Benson (1935) on the other hand reports that the visitor to the Griegg circle was a Mr. Bennett, the architect for some alterations to Stanford's house, and that on Bennett's recommendation Bailey was requested to call at Stanford's home. In any event it seems that Stanford was highly impressed by Bailey's performance; in the darkness of the seance room a shower of road metal or copper ore apparently fell from the heavens on to the table and between the people gathered around the table (Benson 1935; 'Spirits and Ancient Relics' 1905). Stanford immediately contracted Bailey to operate exclusively as his medium. Precise financial details of this arrangement do not seem to have been preserved. Nevertheless Bailey evidently lived in reasonable security from this point; during the day it was sufficient for him to help out at a small laundry. [This business was run by a woman presented by Bailey as his wife, although Dobbie (Note 5) discovered the two were not married, a finding supported by Bailey's description of himself as a 'bachelor' in the official record of his 1946 marriage.]

Regular sittings of Stanford's circle with Bailey commenced in 1902 and were held in a specially reserved room in an office building owned by Stanford and situated in Russell Street in the heart of Melbourne. Stanford did arrange seances with many mediums, including Fred Evans and 'Dr.' Slade, but his work with Bailey over a twelve-year period represents one of the most detailed and sustained records of mediumship in the history of psychical research. Between

1902 and 1913 thorough accounts of weekly or bi-weekly seances were maintained and subsequently these records were presented as ten bound volumes to Stanford University, together with a large collection of objects apported during these sessions.

The major part of Bailey's seances for the Stanford circle comprised a spirit communication in the form of an address on a spiritualist theme, often in the context of an intellectual excursion within the expertise of the control. One particularly frequent communicator was a 'Dr. Robinson', identified as a late Professor of Syro-Chaldaic literature in the Theological Seminary of New York. The discarnate Dr. Robinson communicated all manner of archaeological information consistent with his earthly vocation, and also passed on messages from ancient Aztec personages. The biographical details of Robinson are said to have largely been authentic ('The Mediumship of Mr. C. Bailey' 1905, p. 80). There were numerous controls over the period of Bailey's sittings for Stanford, but most purported to be scholars; in addition to Robinson they included Professor Denton, Dr. Channing, Professor Clifford, and Dr. Witherow. The written records of Bailey's spirit communications do convey a scholarly quality, and, as noted previously, spiritualists frequently made the point that the sophistication of the communications was beyond the intellectual ability of Bailey. The possibility that these addresses were prepared by Bailey from library sources or for Bailey by a better-educated person is consistent with one sceptical sitter's observation that the *style* of delivery was not at all eloquent:

I have heard him deliver half-a-dozen different 'lectures' and 'orations' under 'control', and he never once spoke a piece which could not have been much better memorised and more intelligently delivered by a competent second-rate member of an Anderson Dramatic Co. As a rule, Bailey's discourse was incoherent, yet the circle called it beautiful. (Fisher 1908, p. 413).

But it was not for his spirit addresses that Bailey captured the imagination of the Australian public and earned a place in the annals of psychical research. Rather, Bailey distinguished himself as an apport medium. Certainly the originality and variety of objects apported at Stanford's circle was notable. Stanford had several large aviaries at his home and his interest in birds seemingly instigated an obliging change in the nature of the apports from mundane objects like stones to more appealing ones such as birds, nests, and eggs. Among other apports were live fish, large quantities of seaweed and sand replete with aquatic fauna, a fishing net, a live turtle, exotic plants, ivory, beads and precious stones, foreign and ancient coins, a human skull, a leopard skin, and a sizeable piece of tapestry. Of most interest, however, were apported clay tablets and cylinders claimed to bear ancient Babylonian inscriptions some of which reportedly were translated by spirit controls such as Dr. Robinson (Stanford 1903). The numerous apports sent to Stanford University for display were a source of some embarrassment to varsity administrators and the destruction of much of the collection by the 1906 earthquake might well have been a relief in some quarters.

The monetary value of these apports was reckoned at a very high level by spiritualists, but that is a matter of dispute. In 1905 some of Bailey's apports

were submitted for assessment by officials of the British Museum and it was found that the ancient coins were common and of little value and the inscribed tablets and cylinders were crude forgeries ('The Mediumship of Mr. C. Bailey' 1905, pp. 87-88). The parapsychologist J. B. Rhine later described the Stanford University apport collection as 'junk' and 'worthless' (Crenshaw 1962, p. 35). The exotic origin of some of the apports also is moot. For example, a plant described by Bailey's Hindu control as a peepul tree from India was identified by a botanist as a cutting from an olive tree, of which there were many growing in a nearby district ('The Mediumship of Mr. C. Bailey' 1905, p. 117).

Such revelations did not discourage Bailey's spiritualist supporters. Their reaction was akin to that of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who obtained a clay tablet in a sitting with Bailey in 1920; on learning it too was an imitation, Doyle argued it may have been easier for the discarnate 'transporting agency' to locate and retrieve these forgeries than an authentic tablet buried deep in some archaeological site (Doyle 1921, p. 105). But while the spiritualist response may ring of prejudice it does have an element of rationality in that surely the crucial scientific concern is not the *value* of Bailey's apports but their *origin*.

In the earliest phase of his work with Bailey, Stanford did not strive to demonstrate conclusively the paranormality of the arrival in the seance room of the various objects. His book on the Bailey mediumship (Stanford 1903) gave almost exclusive emphasis to the historical value of Bailey's spirit communications and the spirits' purported translations of inscriptions on some of the clay tablets. In his early reports on the Bailey seances that were passed on for publication in the Australian spiritualist periodical the *Harbinger of Light*, Stanford's emphasis again was on the cultural richness of the information communicated through the poorly educated medium. But the dramatic impact of the apports was not lost on Stanford and he soon appreciated their value to the propagation of spiritualism; in a 1904 interview he commented, 'It is remarkable how many people get their conviction from physical phenomena, and that was the reason that I maintained for so long a time the sittings with Bailey' (Bright 1904, p. 8510). The monthly reports in the *Harbinger of Light* began to give increasing attention to the apports themselves. Indeed, interest among the Australian public grew so much that the periodical introduced a glossy photographic insert with pictures of the diverse and exotic gifts brought by the spirits. (The relative space given to coverage of Stanford's circle became so great, particularly during the period of Annie Bright's editorship, that it is clear the circulation figures of the *Harbinger of Light* owed much to the sensationalism of Bailey's performances.) Having grasped the potential propagandist advantage of the apports Stanford perceived the need for a scientific assessment of the manner by which these objects were produced in the seance room. The reports of the sittings sometimes mentioned that Bailey was searched by Stanford and others before the seance began; these searches were described by one sceptical sitter as a 'farce' (Fisher 1908, p. 413), and they seem to have been more for the purpose of reassuring sitters than for evidential testimony as such. Stanford nevertheless may well have been open to suggestions for controlled scrutiny of Bailey's physical phenomena by an independent investigator.

Now, Stanford previously had organized so-called 'test seances' with other mediums, including the Australian apport medium Mrs. Sarah Paton in 1876

(Denovan 1882, pp. 262-277; Gabay 1984), but Stanford himself was present at all of these and thereby they might not be viewed by sceptics as being independent of him. But the publicity given to Bailey's seances instigated an approach by an eminent Sydney physician, Dr. Charles MacCarthy, to conduct a test series with Bailey; according to MacCarthy (1904, p. 1) Stanford gave his consent 'readily and courteously'. In March 1903 Bailey arrived in Sydney and the first series of tests began two days later.

The MacCarthy seances were held in a first-floor room in Queen's Hall, Pitt Street, Sydney. The room was furnished simply and was said to have had no places for concealing articles. MacCarthy reported that care was taken to ensure only he and two trusted colleagues had access to the seance room outside the times of the sittings. Up to thirty sitters joined the circle; all were chosen by MacCarthy and specifically excluded Bailey's wife. Shortly before each session Bailey was searched by two or three of the sitters, although rarely was he asked to undress for a search. The medium then was enclosed in a double-sewn canvas bag with only his head and hands protruding and with seals at the neck and wrists; on Bailey's request the hands remained free in order that he could receive from the spirits certain fragile objects and living creatures such as birds. The room was in darkness at least for the period in which the 'advanced physical phenomena' occurred.

No apports were received during the first seance; this was said to be due to the fact that rapport first had to be established with the spirit agencies. In five subsequent sessions, however, some 54 articles were produced. These included some inscribed clay tablets, small birds, coins, semi-precious stones, an Arabic newspaper, a crab, and a small barely alive shark (MacCarthy 1904, pp. 36-37).

During a second visit to Sydney in June 1903 Bailey again participated in a test series arranged by MacCarthy. In order to control more rigorously against the possibility of fraudulent secretion of objects in the room by a collusive sitter, MacCarthy required Bailey to conduct seances while enclosed in a 'cage' of mosquito netting. Other variations to the original procedure included stripping the medium to his underwear before being searched, having him wear boxing gloves, having him change into a new suit, or placing him in the canvas bag as well as the cage. A diversity of apports again appeared, all of them inside the cage; most of the articles, such as coins, birds and inscribed cylinders, were rather small, particularly those from the sitting for which Bailey was undressed for searching, but in one session the medium presented a leopard-skin rug over three feet in length.

MacCarthy did note that the impressions on the apported tablets and cylinders looked remarkably sharp and fresh, but he was not perturbed by this, believing the inscriptions to be too difficult to simulate (MacCarthy 1904, p. 48). However, as noted previously, these supposed antiquities subsequently were examined by British Museum officials and declared to be forgeries. Many readers of MacCarthy's (1904) report nevertheless must have been inclined to agree with its conclusion that the arrival of the objects in the seance room was a paranormal event.

It is not a simple matter to determine, over eighty years after the study, how the objects could have been produced by normal means if the tests were conducted strictly as described. It can be argued that Bailey generally knew

beforehand the conditions to be applied in each sitting and hence had the opportunity to devise fraudulent manipulations accordingly. Many small objects could have been hidden in places not searched by sitters; these include Bailey's alimentary tract and the heels of his boots. It also was noted at the time ('The Mediumship of Mr. C. Bailey' 1905, p. 86) that the security of the canvas bag depended crucially upon the tightness of the tapes around the wrists and neck; perhaps Bailey was able to draw one hand back inside the bag and push out of the hole any objects he had secreted on his body. Again, the number of sitters could be deemed too large for adequate control to be effected. The objectivity of the investigator can be queried; although MacCarthy (1904, iv) claimed to have been agnostic to the hypothesis of post-mortem survival when he conducted the tests, it is known that he previously had tested and accepted as paranormal the feats of several mediums (MacCarthy 1904, iii-iv), including the materialization phenomena of Mrs. Annie Mellon (Fodor 1966, pp. 238-239). But it is difficult to account in normal terms for the apparent apparition of large objects (such as a shovel-nose shark one foot in length) without resorting to speculations about MacCarthy's scientific competence or integrity.

The MacCarthy tests had a major impact in Australian spiritualist circles when they were serialized in 1903 and 1904 issues of the *Harbinger of Light*; these reports subsequently were collated by MacCarthy in his booklet *Rigid Tests of the Occult* (1904). Here it seemed was the definitive scientific proof of spiritualist principles. MacCarthy's investigation also stirred up some interest in Bailey among psychical researchers, of whom the first to conduct test seances with Bailey was A. W. Dobbie of Adelaide.

Dobbie, an Australian resident and member of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), had an involvement in such research dating back to at least 1886 (Myers 1903, pp. 543-546). In 1902 or 1903 Dobbie attended some sittings of Stanford's circle in Melbourne and succeeded in obtaining Bailey's agreement to go to Adelaide for test seances. Unfortunately the owner of the house in which these seances were held was uncooperative and adequate test conditions could not be established. During subsequent visits to Melbourne in 1903 Dobbie eventually was granted a private sitting with Bailey, and the medium's Hindu control was called on to translate into Hindustani a sentence dictated by Dobbie. After some prevarication a script was produced through Bailey's hand. On examination by people familiar with Indian dialects the script was identified as 'meaningless scribble' ('The Mediumship of Mr. C. Bailey' 1905, p. 111). Dobbie communicated these results and a copy of the script to Stanford, who responded with an alleged translation by a Hindu. That translation, however, in no way corresponded to Dobbie's original sentence. Although there may be other more innocent explanations of these events there are two primary possibilities here. First, Stanford's translation of the script may have been authentic. In this case Bailey, knowing (as he did) that he would be required to produce a script in an Indian dialect, may have obtained a sentence in such a language and memorized it for the seance in the hope that its discrepancy from the content of the test sentence would be thought less remarkable than the successful production of an Indian script. Alternatively, the script may in fact have been 'meaningless scribble' and its translation utterly bogus. Such an interpretation of the affair is suggestive of Stanford's preparedness to resort to deceit in order to



preserve Bailey's value to the spiritualist crusade. The evidence by no means is conclusive but it does create suspicions about Stanford's role in his own seances with Bailey; that is, it is feasible that Stanford in some degree was in collusion with Bailey in fraudulently producing the apports and preparing material for the spirit communications.

In January 1904 Dobbie with the assistance of J. W. Gellert conducted a series of five test seances with Bailey in Adelaide. The conditions paralleled those of MacCarthy's sittings, with the medium placed in a bag and then in a cage of mosquito netting. Bailey however refused to undress for a search because he claimed to have caught a severe cold when he undressed before one of MacCarthy's test seances. Once again no apports arrived at the first session; if a normal explanation of the apport performances is to be countenanced, the initial absence of apports might be construed to constitute an opportunity for the medium to assess the test conditions and to devise means of circumventing them in later sittings. In any event some small apports were produced in the subsequent sessions. Apart from the usual range of coins, a live bird, and a nest containing an egg, the apports included a small seedling apparently growing in a pot of earth provided by the investigators. Although the seedling was not exotic as the spirit control had declared it to be ('The Mediumship of Mr. C. Bailey' 1905, p. 117), the ostensibly paranormal growth of a seedling in a prepared pot became a feature of Bailey's repertoire (Garscadden 1937). The effect is strikingly similar to the so-called 'mango seed trick' performed for centuries by Indian fakirs and recognized by magicians as a classic of Eastern legerdemain (Tarbell 1953). Dobbie himself believed that the olive-tree cutting produced in his sitting with Bailey could have been hidden in the medium's hair ('The Mediumship of Mr. C. Bailey' 1905, p. 117). Officers of the SPR who examined Dobbie's photographs of the seance arrangements were inclined to believe the small apports obtained in these sessions could readily have been passed out through the neck of the bag in which Bailey was tied. Again the tacit implication here is that the small objects were secreted on or inside Bailey's body.

In the meantime news of Bailey's remarkable performances spread overseas and in 1904 Bailey travelled to Italy for his first test by international psychical researchers. An Australian spiritualist and former resident of Italy Mr. James (or John) Smith wrote to several Italian spiritualists about Bailey's phenomena and eventually Professor Falcomer of Venice was moved to persuade the Milan Society for Psychical Studies to fund a trip by Bailey to Milan for testing by officers of the society. From February to April 1904 a committee of the Milan Society supervised sixteen sittings with Bailey. Detailed reports of the sessions were published in 1904 and 1905 issues of the Society's periodical *Luce e Ombra*; a condensed English translation of the most favourable sections of these reports was published in Australia (*Official Report* ... 1905), presumably for the edification of the home audience, and de Vesme (1905) too wrote a critical survey of the Milan series.

Eight to thirteen sitters took part in these various sessions. Again on the pretext of the danger of catching a cold Bailey rejected the Milan committee's test criterion that he undress for pre-seance searches. The spirit controls further insisted on producing apports only under conditions of total darkness. The committee also had hoped to control Bailey by tying him up, but the entranced

medium, apparently in an endeavour to accompany his spirit address with gestures, struggled so violently and caused such havoc that it was decided thenceforth to use the now familiar sack as the means of control. After an absence of apports in the first sitting the next eleven seances yielded the typical range of small apports: a clay tablet, coins, birds, bird's nest, eggs, mango seedlings, seeds, and a small fish. Phosphorescent clouds, identified as materialized spirits, also were reported by some sitters. For the thirteenth seance the medium was placed in the sack, but fine netting was used to enclose the protruding hands and head; Bailey brought the sitting to an end by entangling himself in part of the cage set up in the seance room, and no apports were forthcoming. Two further sessions were held but no physical phenomena occurred (de Vesme 1905). Because of Bailey's uncooperativeness the Milan committee declined to conclude that the apports were due to paranormal factors, although it also conceded it was unable to account for the apports' arrival in the seance room. Nevertheless, one member of the committee Oreste Cipriani is said to have held the view that Bailey may have swallowed some of the articles and regurgitated them during the seance under cover of darkness ('The Psychical Movement' 1905, p. 77).

According to the account given in a spirit communication through Bailey (Benson 1935, p. 133) the medium left Milan in the company of Smith and conducted private (non-test) seances in Barbaressa, Turin, Padua, Venice, and Rome; the seances in Rome are said to have been for a Lady Butt (de Vesme 1905, p. 251). Bailey earlier had undertaken to leave Italy for London and sit for tests sponsored jointly by the London Spiritualist Alliance (LSA) and the SPR. These sittings however were postponed by Bailey; he claimed to have received news of his father's illness, and from Rome he returned directly to Australia.

Bailey did not immediately resume his sittings for Stanford and appears to have conducted his own private circle in the latter part of 1904. In an undated letter to MacCarthy (concerned in part with money he had borrowed from MacCarthy) Bailey complained he was no longer being supported financially by Stanford and that the latter was 'very bitter against me for leaving and going to Italy' (Note 2). Possibly the arrangements with Mr. Smith did not have Stanford's prior approval. Bailey was also contracted to work overseas for a syndicate in 1905, although he was unable to meet this agreement because of illness. It is interesting that while Bailey was not under Stanford's patronage he seems to have been more open to attack in the press. For example, commenting on the British Museum's identification of Bailey's clay tablets as forgeries, one Melbourne journalist declared, 'We have Mr. Sludge among us, and in the name of public decency, his frauds, now exposed, ought to be suppressed' ('Spirits and Ancient Relics' 1905, p. 8).

Bailey rejoined the Stanford circle early in 1906 and agreed to fulfil Stanford's previous arrangement for the medium's testing in London by the LSA and SPR. In March 1906, however, Bailey suddenly left Melbourne and went on a European tour for his syndicate; private seances were conducted in Naples, Rome, Switzerland, Paris, London, and the Canary Islands. The atmosphere between Bailey and Stanford was strained when the medium returned after an absence of five months, but evidently Stanford appreciated the importance of Bailey to the spiritualist movement: Bailey was permitted to return to Stanford's circle in August. Bailey must have felt some pressure to restore his credibility

with the circle, for in a September sitting his spirit control alleged that during Bailey's recent visit to London the British Museum staff had *authenticated* the apported clay tablets (Bright 1906b, p. 9051), an assertion that is contrary to the testimony of these same officials in the previous year.

Bailey's performances in the Stanford circle continued with little change for the next four years but they still were sufficiently sensational for the *Harbinger of Light* to maintain its monthly illustrated reports of the sittings. A particularly flamboyant session was one Stanford scheduled in May 1908 for the benefit of the Australian press ('Remarkable Apports at Melbourne' 1908; Harvey 1910, pp. 63-64). Bailey sat in a chair placed on top of the table around which 26 sitters were gathered. Reporters heard the creaking of the medium's chair in the darkness and 'swishing' sounds in that vicinity. After some ten minutes the light was restored and Bailey was found dressed in a Mandarin costume; while under the control of the 'spirit of the Celestial' Bailey is said to have spoken in what 'appeared to be perfectly articulated Chinese' (Harvey 1910, p. 64).

Another amusing incident in 1908 provided further publicity for Bailey and his phenomena. According to a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* ('Spiritual Importations' 1908) Stanford's collection of exotic apports had been brought to the attention of the Customs Department and was inspected by a Customs officer with a view to determining if duty on these articles had been avoided. The idea of paying customs duty on gifts conveyed by the spirits was eagerly taken up by the press and enjoyed by the public at large. Stanford reportedly was irritated by the incident and decided to introduce a mosquito-netting cage in his future seances with Bailey, supposedly to demonstrate to the sitters that the phenomena could not be attributed to an illicit smuggling operation. Nevertheless, as Harvey (1910, p. 67) noted, this incident and its attendant press-coverage 'directed public attention to these phenomena in a greater degree than ever'.

Bailey undertook few overseas tours between 1906 and 1910, possibly because of Stanford's displeasure with the 1904 trip to Italy and the 1906 European tour. The medium did go to New Zealand for a short time in 1909 and while in Wellington sat for some test seances featuring the familiar sack and cage methods of control ('The Bailey Seances in Wellington' 1909). A New Zealand magician claimed he could duplicate Bailey's performance by means of conjuring, but the outcome of this challenge is not clear: Houdini (1924, p. 238) reports that the conjurer effectively exposed Bailey as a fraud, yet Benson (1935, p. 133) asserts the conjurer withdrew from the challenge because the controls were too stringent. The opportunity for a rather more significant trip came with Professor Willy Reichel's attendance at the Stanford circle in April and May 1909. Reichel, a French spiritualist, was impressed by the phenomena he observed in Bailey's seances, principally on the grounds that the medium 'submits to all test conditions, and is therefore much easier to get on with than most other mediums' (Reichel 1909, p. 351).

On Reichel's initiative Bailey was invited to participate in test seances under the supervision of a team of French psychical researchers led by Colonel Albert de Rochas. The series, held in Grenoble, was a fiasco. In the second seance two birds were produced while the medium was supposedly under control in a sack, and to ascertain the species of these birds de Rochas took them to a local bird-dealer. The latter reported having recently sold three such birds to an

English-speaking man and he subsequently identified Bailey as the purchaser. On this basis the investigating committee determined to apply more rigorous control measures in the third seance, but Bailey refused to cooperate and the series was terminated. Although there was no positive evidence of legerdemain, the committee concluded that the experiments had been tainted with fraud ('The Bailey Fiasco' 1910; 'Une Fraude de Médium' 1910). Bailey denied the charge of fraud and maintained the bird-dealer was a stooge of the Roman Catholic Church.

According to one report Stanford continued to defend his medium, presumably because much of the appeal of Australian spiritualism now rested on Bailey's reputation; while he recognized Bailey could be 'unreliable' at times, Stanford is said to have suggested that some mundane objects, conceivably including the birds of the Grenoble bird-dealer, inadvertently could come into contact with Bailey's 'magnetic' influence when he was in their vicinity and these objects could materialize in the seance room ('The Case of Mr. Charles Bailey' 1910). Certainly Bailey's exposure at Grenoble did not prompt Stanford to terminate his patronage of the medium; Bailey returned to Australia and rejoined the Stanford circle in June 1910. Regular sittings with the circle continued until February of the following year, when Bailey left for an extended visit to Britain. By this time Stanford apparently was resigned to the fact that Bailey would not remain exclusively contracted to him, and Bailey's visit to London was managed by a man calling himself Professor Albert J. Abbott (Baggally 1912, p. 194).

The London sittings were held in the flat of another noted Australian medium Mrs. Annie Foster-Turner (see e.g., Doyle 1921, pp. 259-264) and were private rather than test seances. Tickets were sold for half a guinea (Marriott 1911, p. 777) and thus the performances must have been quite lucrative. Once again Bailey's sittings were the point of much discussion in spiritualist publications such as *Light* (e.g., Abbott 1911). In one session the eminent magician William Marriott claimed to have located apports hidden on three areas of the medium's body and noted that an apported grass apron showed signs of having been compressed (Marriott 1911).

During the following month (July 1911) Bailey agreed to sit for some test seances under the supervision of a committee formed by a physician Dr. Abraham Wallace (Baggally 1912; Wallace 1911). Other members of the committee included Everard Feilding a prominent psychical researcher and secretary of the SPR, W. Baggally a conjurer and SPR member, and a 'well-known conjurer' (probably Marriott). The medium's colleagues Abbott and Foster-Turner attended these test seances but are said to have been so positioned as to be under adequate control. For the first test Bailey was stripped and his clothes searched, although he refused to submit to a 'surgical' examination (Baggally 1912, p. 198). Feilding in particular was alert to the need for such an examination: a few years earlier he had investigated a case in which apparently apported objects were found to have been secreted in a suppository tube (Feilding 1905/1963). In any event, during the first seance with Bailey a nest with two small eggs was produced while the medium sat in a netting cage. The investigators noted that the 'nest' was nothing more than some loose fibres which could have been secreted in the lining of Bailey's clothes and not detected

in the pre-seance search; Bailey however left the house before the committee could determine if the lining of his clothes had become unstitched. In the second sitting Bailey's body was to be enclosed in a satinette bag without the medium being informed beforehand, but Bailey's spirit control refused to let the medium be controlled in this manner until the next seance. In the third session Bailey was placed in a netting sack which extended over his head, and no apports were produced. Two small birds were apported in the following sitting but Baggally found a small hole had been made in one corner of the sack and that some down from bird's feathers appeared on the *inside* of the sack. Wallace and Baggally came to the conclusion that the apport performances were not genuine and pointed to deliberate fraud.

Bailey immediately left London for a series of sittings in Rothesay, Scotland at the home of James Coates. The latter was an ardent spiritualist and vigorously criticized as shabby the treatment of the 'friendless and much maligned' Bailey in the London test seances (Coates 1911b, p. 466). There were four sittings for the Rothesay circle between 3rd and 7th July 1911. A typical selection of small apports was produced, for which Bailey was paid the considerable sum of £25 (Coates 1911a).

On returning to Melbourne Bailey set out to re-establish a good working relationship with Stanford and he participated in the Stanford circle for the next three years. His career as a medium, however, declined in this period. Perhaps the string of exposures in test seances finally began to catch up with Bailey, but there were several additional set-backs. In June 1913 Annie Bright died. Under Bright's editorship of the Australian spiritualist monthly the *Harbinger of Light*, Bailey had received a great deal of favourable publicity, but with her demise the attention given in the periodical to Bailey's performances began to become much more cursory. Then in January 1914 Bailey made an error which could have resulted in his exposure and which must at least have raised questions in the minds of the more critically minded of Australian spiritualists. At this time Bailey was using the popular mediumistic device of receiving spirit messages written on the inside of a locked slate. On this particular occasion the slate had not been correctly sealed and the padlock was looped through only one side of the slate. The slate was returned to the sitter properly locked, suggesting that Bailey either had switched slates or had a duplicate key to the padlock ('Psychical Research in Melbourne' 1914, p. 55). The incident nevertheless was depicted as yet another remarkable demonstration of Bailey's powers.

There was a more serious occurrence in March of the same year. Bailey held a seance at Leigh House, Castlereagh Street, Sydney with some 45 sitters. The medium sat in a corner of the room behind a curtain by way of an extemporized cabinet. During the session four or five materialized forms appeared at different times. Then one sitter who was near the cabinet grabbed at the 'ghostly apparition' and called for the light. The sitter, a Mr. R. Towns, reported he had hold of flimsy material rather like mosquito netting. Bailey is said to have pulled the drapery from the sitter's grasp and thrust it under his coat. It also is alleged that Bailey was discovered with one of his boots off. Other sitters joined the confrontation and Bailey may have been jostled. He ran from the seance room and pursued by several sitters, sought refuge in the residence of his long-time supporter, Dr. MacCarthy. Again the spiritualist press ('The Alleged Exposure

of Bailey' 1914; 'A Materialisation Sensation' 1914), and even some of the sitters at that session, defended Bailey against the imputation of fraud, principally on the (irrelevant) grounds of the long-standing unwritten rule of the seance room, that a medium must never be touched while in trance. The affair was debated in newspapers and even in a specially convened public meeting ('Production of Spirits' 1914). Bailey nevertheless was back sitting for the Stanford circle one week after the exposure. According to an account by Dr. David Jordan, the Stanford University president who was visiting Stanford at the time, Bailey's spirit control Dr. Whitcomb gave a most unconvincing explanation of the Sydney exposure and finally Stanford called on the control to 'close his tirade' and get on with the business of the seance (Note 6). Stanford clearly was tiring of Bailey's behaviour but was not yet at the point where he thought he would be better off without Bailey's services.

The visit to Melbourne by Dr. Jordan was a further source of pressure upon Bailey. As mentioned earlier, Stanford had established at Stanford University a fellowship in psychical research. The first recipient of this fellowship was Dr. John Coover who held it from 1912 to 1937 (Dommeyer 1975). The principal objective of Jordan's Australian trip in 1914 was to make arrangements for Coover to assess scientifically Bailey's reputed mediumistic abilities. In writing to Coover on the matter, Jordan reported, 'He [Stanford] wants you to investigate Bailey, his connection with 'Dr. Whitcomb', his 'control', his power over apparitions, his relation to matter and spirits generally. . . . As to Bailey, Mr. S. [Stanford] says that he is personally valueless, a liar, a shameless grafter, whose word is worthless, and who is worth knowing only as one sensitive to the influences of the other world' (Note 7). Jordan also advised that Stanford would not allow his medium to submit to a naked examination or 'anything else humiliating': Bailey must be permitted to retain at least his underclothing during any pre-seance search. It would seem Stanford here was trying to assist Bailey to pass Coover's tests, but at the same time by drawing attention to Bailey's untrustworthiness Stanford covered himself in the event of an unfavourable outcome from the investigation.

Whether for the reason that the academic's tests were too threatening or that the recent set-backs were having a cumulative effect, Bailey fled the country a few weeks later. After a brief rest in Rome he proceeded to Rothesay in Scotland to give a second series of sittings for Coates. Bailey stayed with Coates for at least six weeks. His seances there were not open to the general public, and apart from the usual phenomena the sittings really were notable only for Bailey's introduction to the medium's trumpet by Coates' wife (Coates 1914a,b).

Little is known of Bailey's activities in the latter half of the 1910s and it is possible he gave up mediumship for a while; thus Coates (1914b, p. 363) expressed his regret that Bailey was to be 'lost to the movement'. Bailey did not return to Melbourne and his break with Stanford apparently was irrevocable: Stanford did not forward to Stanford University the records of Bailey's sittings for him in 1914, as he had done in all previous years of the association. The *Harbinger of Light* still tried to make some capital out of Bailey's phenomena and even in 1915 it was publishing accounts of some of his seances, but unlike previous reports these were undated and unnumbered and hence they probably

related to sittings held long before. Stanford himself died in 1918, and Bailey's other enduring supporter Dr. MacCarthy died the following year.

Nevertheless by 1920 Bailey was back in Australia and settled in Sydney, where he conducted private seances and gave occasional trance addresses during services at spiritualist churches. He was sufficiently well established within the Sydney spiritualist network that he was selected for private sittings with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle when the latter toured Australia in late 1920 and early 1921; as a consequence of these seances Doyle was convinced of the authenticity of Bailey's apports and dismissed the earlier exposures of the medium (Doyle 1921, pp. 99-106; 1926, pp. 213-216). For the most part, however, apports were produced less frequently in Bailey's sittings after 1920. He preferred trance addresses, medical readings, and direct-voice seances featuring an Australian version of the medium's trumpet known as the Shastaphone (Benson 1926, 1935). Bailey enjoyed the support of a loyal band of spiritualists and at a seance in September 1927 his followers presented him with a silver candlestick to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of his 'active mediumship' (which, judging by the date, was deemed to have begun with the Stanford circle).

One historically contentious aspect of Bailey's life in the 1920s is whether he was in England in 1927 and working (with his wife) under the pseudonym of P. S. Mills-Tanner. In January that year a woman named Eve Brackenbury attended a seance in which Mills-Tanner was the medium and which was held under the auspices of a spiritualist group, the Temple of Light. Brackenbury's report (Note 8) on the seance and further investigation by Dr. Eric Dingwall, at that time the SPR research officer, led Dingwall to the conclusion that the medium Mills-Tanner was none other than Charles Bailey. This view was based largely on similarities between the performances of Mills-Tanner and those of Bailey. Mills-Tanner produced apports, and they were comparable to those associated with Bailey; they included birds, fish, and exotic articles, although apported flowers were rather more common than had been the case in Bailey's sittings. The general style of Mills-Tanner's and Bailey's seances was similar. In his sessions Bailey had spoken what appeared to be an Indian dialect, and Mills-Tanner is said to have been able to speak in such a tongue. And Mills-Tanner acknowledged having been to Australia. Identification evidently was made conclusive on inspection of some old photographs of Bailey (probably those taken by MacCarthy and by Dobbie about a quarter of a century earlier). According to Dingwall, Mills-Tanner used a very strong perfume but still was malodorous; this Dingwall attributes to Bailey's practice of hiding small apport objects in his rectum, causing incontinence. Dingwall also reports that when he asked Mills-Tanner how Australia was getting along the medium was very much taken aback (Note 1).

Of course the evidence largely is circumstantial that Bailey was masquerading as Mills-Tanner in London in 1927. Similarity of seance phenomena is evidently insufficient, and identification of a person on the basis of 25-year-old photographs is open to error. In considering the likelihood that Bailey was performing under the name of Mills-Tanner it is important to note the previous history of Mills-Tanner. An English spiritualist pastor by that name was recruited in October 1914 by the Geelong Spiritual Research Society to conduct its Sunday church services in Geelong, a town some forty miles south-west of

Melbourne. The Mills-Tanner of 1914 was said to come from London and have visited India. He held a Bachelor of Arts degree and gave church services indicative of a sound knowledge of the Bible, spiritualist principles, the practices of mediumship, and the arguments used by critics of spiritualism. He also was a joint author of a short book on spiritualism (Mills-Tanner and McIntosh 1915). Although he occasionally gave clairvoyant messages during his services there is no indication that he conducted seances per se, particularly ones featuring physical phenomena. Mills-Tanner left Geelong in May 1915 and worked for the Church of Seers in Sydney until July and for other spiritualist churches in Queensland until September, when he returned to Sydney and reportedly left 'for the front' (in World War I) in October.

Could Bailey have been in London in 1927? Judging by Dingwall's records Mills-Tanner conducted his seances there from late 1926 until at least the early months of 1927, and by 1928 had broken from the Temple of Light to run a spiritualist church of his own. Now, early in 1927 Dingwall tried to establish if Bailey had left Australia, but Dingwall's Australian contact (Gellert) was unable to determine this. The only positive reference to Bailey's whereabouts during this period is his twenty-fifth anniversary seance in Sydney in September 1927 (Benson 1927). On the limited data available, therefore, it is conceivable that Bailey was in London until mid-1927, then returned to Sydney for a period before resuming his role as Mills-Tanner in England.

Mills-Tanner is said also to have been employed as a press photographer in 1927. There seems to be no extant documentation of Bailey's interest or skills in photography, although certainly it would not have been out of character for Bailey to allege his employment in a vocation of which he knew little.

Again, it is not very clear why Bailey would wish to work under another name. Bailey's long history of spectacular seance phenomena and his recent approbation by Conan Doyle should surely have left Bailey with ample support from English spiritualists had he chosen to perform under his own name. Possibly he simply wished to exercise his profession without letting critics have as ammunition the series of his past exposures, yet this evidently was of no concern in the conduct of his Sydney practice where Bailey continued to use his own name.

While there are no substantial grounds for maintaining that Bailey could not have masqueraded as Mills-Tanner in 1927, there is one fact that might be taken to indicate the Mills-Tanner of 1927 was actually the man who worked as a pastor in Geelong in 1914-15. During her attendance at one of Mills-Tanner's London seances, Brackenbury observed a framed certificate hanging on the wall of the medium's home. The certificate appeared to have been presented to Mills-Tanner 'by the Geelong or Geelong Society of Psychical Researchers in appreciation of his services'; signed by about fifteen people, it 'was dated Australia 1915' (Note 9). Possibly this certificate was forged, although Bailey would have had little need to strive to *prove* his identity as Mills-Tanner. But rather than prompting the conclusion that the Mills-Tanner in London was indeed the 'real' Mills-Tanner, Brackenbury's observation cues us to take the identification between Bailey and Mills-Tanner and to extend it retrospectively to the Australian career of Mills-Tanner in 1914-15. That is, might Bailey also have been the person who acted as the spiritualist pastor in Geelong?



Well, during 1914 Bailey had fled from Stanford's circle for the last time and after acting as medium for the Rothesay circle in Scotland in June and July, he left Coates with the impression that he was abandoning mediumship. From that point nothing is known of Bailey until he lived and worked in Sydney from approximately 1920. As far as the historical records are concerned, therefore, in October 1914 Bailey could have assumed the role of an English pastor in Geelong. If this was the case the quality of Mills-Tanner's church services and his book (Mills-Tanner and McIntosh 1915) certainly indicate Bailey had the intellectual skills and knowledge to have personally prepared the spirit communications received in the Stanford circle. There also may have been some motivation for the 1914 masquerade: Bailey may have decided to work as a pastor and give up the physical phenomena of mediumship because his apport performances were damaging his health and frequently were responsible for his exposure as a fraud. Additionally there might have been good reason for his working under another name. Although Bailey had been exposed by various investigators he had never been exposed in front of his patron Stanford. The projected tests by the Stanford University fellow, Dr. Coover, threatened to do just that, so perhaps Bailey thought it advisable to lie low for a while. But it is curious that he, under the name of Bailey, did not re-emerge in the public arena until shortly after Stanford's death. Possibly it was Stanford from whom Bailey was hiding, yet Bailey had shown little fear of Stanford's wrath in earlier times. Perhaps Bailey felt his flight from Coover's tests had discredited him with Melbourne spiritualists, but then even actual exposures on other occasions had never prompted him to adopt a new identity. His flight from Melbourne and his subsequent re-emergence after Stanford's death might instead be seen to suggest Stanford had some role in Bailey's masquerade as Mills-Tanner in 1914; that is, it may have been Stanford, not Bailey, who felt threatened by the prospect of Bailey's exposure by Coover. Stanford therefore may have induced Bailey to disappear from the arena of mediumship and to work under another name in an adjacent vocation, an arrangement which Bailey observed until Stanford's death.

The facts of this episode may never be known. My sole doubt that Bailey was Mills-Tanner in 1914-15 is based on the photographic record. Although the photograph of Mills-Tanner (Mills-Tanner and McIntosh 1915, opposite p. 9) shows general similarity to those of Bailey in the previous decade, even if Mills-Tanner is presumed to be wearing a toupee there seem to my eye to be small physical discrepancies (in regard to ears, for example) which suggest the photograph in Mills-Tanner's book is not one of Bailey.

If Bailey did operate as Mills-Tanner in England during the late 1920s it was not for long. In 1931 a retired magistrate H. L. Williams reported Bailey was very active as a medium in Sydney and still producing remarkable apports ('International Notes' 1931, p. 257). A Scottish spiritualist George Garscadden, who migrated to Sydney in the early 1920s, conducted Bailey's circles throughout the 1930s, usually at the home of a Mr. Harry Murphy in Brookvale (Garscadden 1937, 1939) but also in other Sydney suburbs such as Mosman and the Glebe (Neil 1947). At least at one stage these circles met fortnightly and might have sat even more frequently at times. Apports continued to be produced, but Bailey now seems to have preferred to perform as a direct-voice medium

using the Shastaphone trumpet (Neil 1947). According to a report in 1932 ('Mr. Charles Bailey: Visit to London' 1932) a Mr. MacDonald Bayne was arranging for Bailey to visit London for the purpose of conducting sittings with the Shastaphone, but there are no reports of this visit actually having taken place.

In December 1946 Bailey, now 76 years old, married Lily Phillips under his family name of Beasmore. Although his wife described herself in the official marriage register as a widow, Bailey declared himself a bachelor. With a touch of the characteristically dry Australian humour Bailey also entered his occupation as 'retired antique dealer'. The marriage was short-lived: in the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital on 19 April 1947, Bailey died from kidney failure. He died intestate. His ashes were scattered on the Rose Garden of Rookwood Crematorium in Sydney; there is no stone or plaque to mark his passing.

Charles Neil (1947), the spiritualist pastor who conducted the funeral service, described Bailey as 'the world's greatest apport medium' (p. 25) and 'the greatest medium of this age' (p. 26). But the unsatisfactory outcomes of several series of test seances and the other informal exposures leave such a eulogy with little foundation. Bailey was a mediumistic scoundrel, even if innovative and moderately successful in this role. His career nevertheless had substantial implications both for the Australian spiritualist movement and for Australian psychical research. Each of these will briefly be addressed in turn.

While Bailey presumably was motivated by reasons of personal gain and satisfaction there is no doubt his activities were used by others in the cause of Australian spiritualism. His relationship with Stanford in particular can be seen in this light. Stanford's devotion to the propagation of spiritualism made him ready on many occasions to excuse Bailey's indiscretions. Of course, there were times when Stanford was very angry with and embarrassed by his medium and the relationship between the two men often was under considerable strain, yet Stanford evidently saw Bailey as a weak, unreliable but nonetheless valuable tool, one to be used in capturing the attention of the general public and stimulating interest in spiritualist philosophy. The extent to which Stanford was prepared to collude with Bailey in fraudulent seance phenomena must remain a matter of speculation, but it is difficult to imagine how Bailey could have produced some of the large apports without having Stanford at least turn a blind eye to pre-seance provisioning of the room in which the circle met. Stanford's refusal to permit Coover to conduct a 'surgical' search of Bailey also smacks of mischievous intervention by Stanford. Again, such acts should be seen not so much as personally advantageous to Stanford but as a necessary piece of stage-management for a much higher cause in which Stanford fervently believed. It is notable that in 1914, when Bailey left Stanford for the last time, Bailey's spirit controls were used by other mediums employed for the Stanford circle; ultimately Stanford could expend with Bailey, but not with the familiar spirits that Bailey had introduced to the circle.

The Australian spiritualist monthly the *Harbinger of Light* also regarded Bailey as an important resource. His seance performances often were discussed in the popular press and many readers were drawn to discover more about these phenomena by consulting the illustrated and detailed seance reports published exclusively in the *Harbinger of Light*. So important was Bailey regarded by the

monthly's editorial staff that when he was absent on overseas trips, records of past sittings for the Stanford circle were retrieved from the archives and published. This was not for the purpose of simply boosting profits; the *Harbinger of Light* was owned and staffed by spiritualists, and increases in the periodical's circulation were seen as opportunities to expose more members of the public to the message of spiritualism.

Bailey's career also played some part in the growth of Australian spiritualists' antipathy toward scientific investigation of the phenomena of the seance room. Spiritualists came to place increasing emphasis upon the significance of personal revelation in the development of faith. In this context any efforts of psychical researchers were deemed superfluous; there was no need to ascertain the truth when the truth already was evident. Even today there are Australian spiritualists who cite Bailey's performances as the most persuasive in the history of mediumship.

Although Bailey was a fillip to the progress of Australian spiritualism his effect upon Australian psychical research was not so beneficial. At the time, Dr. Charles MacCarthy's investigation of Bailey was to all appearances a landmark in Australian psychical research. Certainly there were earlier Australian studies featuring variously controlled observation of mediums, but none seemed so stringently designed and fully documented as that by MacCarthy. His investigation also had the feature of being conducted by a scientifically trained researcher, and this was quite uncommon among the previous studies. The ostensible professionalism of the research, in conjunction with the sensational character of Bailey's phenomena, generated a great deal of publicity in Australia for MacCarthy's investigation and it thereby had the potential for attracting other Australian intellectuals into psychical research. In short, the MacCarthy experiments should have marked the onset of a period of vigorous growth in Australian scientific investigation of the paranormal. That they did not do so may in part be due to the prevailing intellectual conservatism but is more fundamentally a reflection of the subsequent series of exposures of Bailey as a fraud. Although these exposures did not conclusively identify any flaw in MacCarthy's experimental procedure they did imply that MacCarthy in some way must have been outwitted by Bailey, presumably by way of the latter's techniques of hiding apports in his rectum and other places. Seemingly with all the best scientific intentions and professionalism it still was possible for the psychical researcher to be made to look an utter fool. Although there were no indications that MacCarthy ever regarded his investigation as invalid, the exposures of Bailey must surely have discouraged Australian scientists from risking their professional reputations in psychical research in the manner that MacCarthy had. For this and other reasons scientific involvement in Australian psychical research all but vanished until after the Second World War (Note 10) [notwithstanding the period of residence in Australia of such a man as Dr. R. J. Tillyard]. It is possible too that after MacCarthy's unequivocal support for Bailey's psychical abilities the exposures left Australian research collectively in a very bad light; thus in international circles Australian psychical research had not established its credibility or its investigatory tradition. In Australia itself the infantile status of psychical research would have merged with an enduring Australian sense of inferiority over the cultural sophistication of this young

nation. Bailey's spectacular career therefore left little to encourage Australian intellectuals to delve into the psychic realm.

The saga of Charles Bailey is an eventful if not a pretty one, but it both encapsulates and in some measure explains the courses of spiritualism and psychical research in Australia during the early decades of the 20th century.

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The correspondence of David Starr Jordan to John Coover is quoted by kind permission of the Stanford University Archives.

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